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## **AN APPRECIATION OF DR. DARLENE MILLER**

*by Paul Rademacher*

The people who have the greatest impact on this world are not always the most vocal or visible. Theirs is the craft of “presence.” They find subtle ways to bring about change without drawing attention to themselves, shaping the world as much by who they are as by what they do. They are alchemists of the spirit.

Darlene Miller is such a person. Since 1988, she has been working with The Monroe Institute®, navigating its unpredictable mix of circumstance and personality with her quiet wisdom, infinite patience, and open heart. Her recorded voice has propelled thousands of our graduates on adventures beyond their wildest imaginings. Her insight has helped to design a multitude of new programs for TMI. Her “eye of the hurricane” demeanor has been the calm in the midst of upheaval and transition. Her counseling has provided solid ground for adventurers, seekers, skeptics, stragglers, and strugglers.

Dar’s impact has been so profound that the announcement of her retirement caught us by surprise and engendered more than a little consternation. To say she will be missed is an understatement. As a way of saying goodbye and celebrating her gifts, I’d like to highlight aspects of her life that most of you probably don’t know. It is the nature of a quiet life that much can go unnoticed.

Growing up in a working-class family, Dar had a father who was convinced that women had no business attending institutions of higher learning. The problem: Dar was precocious and hungry for knowledge. Despite her father’s objections, she enrolled at Ursinus College and paid her own way, working two jobs in the summer and—when classes were in session—running a snack bar as well as working in the college kitchen. In addition, she played on the college tennis, basketball, and field hockey teams, was president of the student council, and was a member of the glee club. Though she only got about three hours of sleep a night, she graduated with a BS in psychology.

After completing her undergraduate degree Dar was accepted into the University of Massachusetts, earning first her master’s degree in psychology and then her doctorate in clinical psychology. During her last year of doctoral work she took an internship at Fort Logan Mental Health Hospital doing juvenile detention consulting, working with thirteen- to eighteen-year-olds. She fell in love with juvenile delinquents because “They could immediately spot a phony. They were always testing, but if you were honest and straight with them, they would give you immediate respect.”

In 1971 she began work with the Colorado Division of Youth Services consulting team and shortly after taking the job was sent to Sacramento, California, to attend a six-week intensive seminar led by Marguerite Q. Warren, PhD. Rita pioneered a sophisticated model for the differential diagnosis and treatment of juvenile offenders. It was a radical departure from the custodial/punishment model that then was mostly the norm for prison systems across the country.

Dar brought Rita's system back to Colorado and began instituting it statewide. Over time, the state's recidivism rate for juvenile offenders dropped from 70 percent to 25 percent. The Colorado system became an international model and was visited by prison officials from all over the world.

In 1979, Dar became the director of Lookout Mountain School in Golden, Colorado, a 180 bed institution for court-committed violent and sex offenders. She was the first woman director in its 100 year history.

Rita came to TMI in 1979 to attend a *GATEWAY VOYAGE*®. When she told Dar about her experience, it immediately created a dilemma. To Dar's ears, Rita's tales sounded like a description of a cult. But because Dar respected Rita so much, she couldn't dismiss what she was hearing.

Finally, in 1983, Dar attended her first *GATEWAY VOYAGE*. By that time she was meditating regularly and had been deeply influenced by *A Course in Miracles*. During the program not much happened, except for the fact that she was immediately able to access "the void" in Focus 15, a place she had tried for years to achieve through meditation, without success. She was impressed. But she also had a vivid, clear image at one point of "being at TMI." Dar decided if that was going to happen it wouldn't be until after she was too old to ski.

Meanwhile, things had started to go sour in Colorado. The legislature cut back on funding for the treatment program and its effectiveness was reduced. Dar was also getting burned out.

In 1984, Rita called Dar saying that she and her husband, Martin, were moving to the "New Land" being developed by Bob Monroe and that Dar was welcome to be their guest rent free. She could just come, chill out, and recharge her batteries. Dar took them up on the offer and spent the next year sitting on their back porch watching the wonder of nature unfold.

When Bob Monroe found out Dar had a doctorate, he persuaded her to volunteer for monitoring *EXPLORER* sessions in the lab. Scooter McMoneagle then commissioned her to become a residential facilitator. Dar loved it. She had free time and enjoyed the contrast of working with healthy adults.

In 1988, Dar came on staff full time to implement *PREP* (Personal Resource Exploration Program) sessions and to act as staff psychologist as well as a trainer. The Explorer sessions had originally been designed for a small group of volunteers who would pursue answers to the big questions of life. While they did get some answers, Dar began to notice that the nonphysical sources they were contacting were more interested in issues of personal growth than in answering the riddles of the Universe.

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Because of this, Dar proposed that the *PREP* sessions be opened up to a larger group. This was eventually accomplished by integrating them into the *GUIDELINES*® program and by making them available to the general public for a fee. Skip Atwater was a big part of that process and instituted the practice of physiological measurement during *PREP* sessions.

From 1991 onward, Dar also worked extensively with the *LIFELINE*® program, tweaking and refining it while training all of the sessions through 1994. From Dar's perspective these were wonderful years because she was able to witness such dramatic transformations in participants over a six-day period of exposure to the Monroe model.

But Dar began to feel restless, longing for Colorado and the West and yearning for a new challenge. So in 1994 she bought a one-way ticket to Denver without telling Bob Monroe. She didn't want him to know, but somehow Bob got wind of her plans. He took her to lunch and told her he didn't want her to go. Then Bob set the hook: he wanted her to oversee the *GOING HOME*® series. He laid out a vision of it being used in hospices worldwide with Dar in charge of disseminating it.

Dar always had trouble saying "no" to Bob. But even more, she was deeply inspired by the *GOING HOME* project. Dar canceled her one-way ticket, stopped training programs, and began work on the dream. That same year she became director of programs.

When Bob Monroe passed away in 1995, Dar was responsible for informing the staff. In the process, she was the one to provide comfort and solace while also alleviating fears that TMI might not survive.

To make matters worse, the new *EXPLORATION 27*® program was scheduled for rollout that year. Despite constant nagging from the staff, Bob had not done any work on it before he died. Dar connected with residential trainer Franceen King and they collaborated to create the curriculum and recordings, working until the last minute on the finishing touches.

During a three-week period Dar worked on the scripts all day long. Near the end she realized that she had been in Focus 27 much of the time and became keenly aware of both Bob and

Nancy Monroe's presence. That realization reassured Dar and the staff that it was possible to carry on, even faced with the devastating loss of TMI's founder.

During Laurie Monroe's years as TMI president and executive director, Dar was her friend, confidant, and adviser. She worked tirelessly with the residential facilitators to introduce *HEARTLINE*, *TIMELINE*, *MC<sup>2</sup>*, *STARLINES* and *STARLINES II*. She was a driving force behind the OUTREACH program and acted as an unofficial quality checker for the majority of Hemi-Sync® recordings and new releases. In her role as staff psychologist, she fielded hundreds of tough phone calls and other emergencies while continuing to provide *PREP* sessions both within *GUIDELINES* programs and for individual sessions.

Dar was also deeply involved with the *POSITIVE IMMUNITY* program. She worked closely with professional member Jim Greene of Washington, D.C., as he pulled together groups of HIV/AIDS patients and the two of them crafted the program with an eye toward meeting those patients' special needs.

It speaks volumes about Dar's caring and compassion that through the years, she also continued active correspondence with many of the inmates she had worked with in Colorado. She saw that they were supplied with Hemi-Sync, while acting as both counselor and adviser at no charge.

The list could go on. Suffice it to say that Dar has touched more lives through her work than most people could ever hope to do. As she says: "It's been a great ride. There hasn't been a day that I haven't loved coming to work." And in that work she has made an incalculable impact on the world.

When Bob Monroe convinced Dar to join the TMI staff he promised her as much vacation time as she wanted. He never mentioned she would be too busy to take any of it.

Now it is her time: time to choose each day what she wants to do. There is music to be played, writing to be done, watercolors to be painted, crossword puzzles to be solved, a back porch to be sat on, and travel to the beach and to Colorado that is long overdue.

Thank you, Dar, from all of us. We love you and wish you great joy in retirement. Your subtle alchemy of the spirit has made all the difference to TMI and the far-flung TMI family.



This portrait—a gift from a program participant—captures Dar's essence so beautifully that we've included this photo although there is some reflection from the glass covering it.

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